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ABSTRACT

Ten questions about careers in journalism and communications are asked and answered in this booklet. The questions are: Is journalism mainly newspaper work? What opportunities are there today? How is the pay in journalism? Are there incentives besides pay? What about working conditions? What about opportunities for women? What about advancement in the field? What kind of a person can succeed in journalism? How do you prepare for a journalism career? and Where is more career information available? (TO)

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JOURNALISM

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THE BIG STORY

Ten Questions and Answers About the Booming Career Field Of Journalism and Communications

Compiled by:
The Headline Club of Chicago, Chapter of Sigma Delta Chi,
National Professional Journalism Society

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THE BIG STORY

The Booming Career Field
of Journalism and Communications

"Journalism?" asked the student, "Isn't it a declining field?'

Is it?

Piecemeal or outdated information may create this impression. Actually, journalism is one of the most opportunity-laden, challenging, satisfying and broad careers open to young people today. It's exciting and important. And journalism needs thousands of new professionals for its varied and growing opportunities.

If you want the facts,
read these 10 questions and answers about journalism.

Copy by Alfred Balk
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(Revised 1973)

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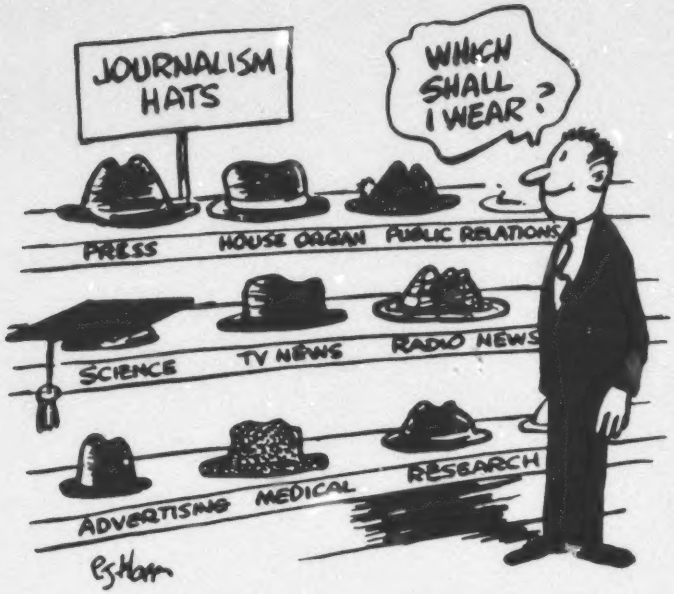

Is journalism mainly newspaper work?

Definitely not.

Other areas in journalism far outnumber newspapers in total employment today. Journalists also work in radio-TV news, for news-gathering associations such as Associated Press and United Press International, on national and regional magazines, newsmagazines, trade magazines (Advertising Age, Iron Age, and the like), professional journals like the American Bar Association Journal and the National Education Association Journal, and house organs — those magazines published by a company for its employees, sometimes for outsiders. On public relations and information staffs, including those of social agencies. As writers with companies and corporations that have need of technical writers on medical, scientific, and other generally complex subjects. And on the publications staff of government and foundation organizations.

What's more, the management side of the various media extends still another vast array of jobs to those with a feeling for business and journalism. Journalists do more than report and edit for newspapers. They write and read newscasts on local and network radio and television, they produce public affairs programs, including documentaries, they write and edit the nonfiction portions of mass magazines, work on retail, corporate or agency advertising assignments, and produce all the editorial material for publications widely distributed though not sold on newsstands. These publications fill the inch-thick Gebbie's House Organ Directory.

Journalism is presentation of information in dozens of ways — reporting, writing, editing, photography, promoting, broadcasting-telecasting, and the graphic arts.

Q-2

What opportunities are there today?

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Journalism has more jobs than can be filled, even in the foreseeable future. A special report by the Kiplinger Organization in the sixties estimated that broadcasting-telecasting will need 65 per cent more employees by 1975, printing and publishing in general, 39 per cent more (including non-journalism jobs).

Two dozen of the nation's largest newspapers now send recruiters to selected college campuses. Despite liquidation of a half-dozen national magazines in the past ten years, others (their editorial content now three-fourths non-fiction and one-fourth fiction, a reversal of the pre-World War II ratio) compete actively for trained writers and editors. New regional and specialized magazines, all needing new talent, are born each year. Metropolitan daily newspapers, even though not enlarging staffs significantly, must fill openings caused by normal turnover, while newly emergent and metropolitan neighborhood newspapers also are recruiting trained reporters, editors and advertising people. Teachers of journalism, both for high schools and colleges, are more sought after now than ever before.

Because information-gathering and information-evaluation can never be automated, the demand for communications specialists can only increase as our population increases. And a lag in obtaining "new blood" caused by misinformation and lack of information about new journalism opportunities in recent years will make job choices even more attractive in the immediate future.

Further, career opportunities in journalism aren't restricted to any single region. Though most jobs tend to be in the largest cities, in newspaper, radio-TV, advertising, public relations and specialized writing fields, there are many in smaller communities because of firms and the "publics" which must be served there.

How is the pay in journalism?

Financial reward throughout the entire field of journalism compares favorably with others such as engineering or even law. Starting salaries on medium or small-sized newspapers may be modest, $100 a week for example. But these are representative neither of the entire field nor of higher-level positions on these same publications.

Many newspapers pay a reporter just out of college $140 a week if he has obtained some experience to make him worth hiring. In fact, some leading journalism schools and departments report an average salary of between $120 and $150 a week for their graduates. For journalists with experience a radio-TV newswriter and editor may expect from $6,000 to $10,000 a year in a metropolitan market, even more if he goes on the air with the news. Corporations pay news bureau and public relations staff members $6,000 to $20,000 annually. An industrial or trade magazine may pay an editor with experience $10,000 or more a year.

The most encouraging part of journalism pay is the increase in recent years. One Association for Education in Journalism survey shows starting salaries have jumped 18 per cent in two years. Changing Times Magazine estimated top reporters in major cities now receive $800 to $1,000 a month or more. Editors — large newspapers with many editions and departments have many editors — in general receive more than reporters. Fringe benefits in all branches of journalism now are generally comparable to those in other fields, including paid vacations, sick leave and insurance, overtime or bonus provisions, and in some cases (mainly public relations and house organs) profit-sharing and stock-option plans.

Are there incentives besides pay?

"Were it left for me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate to prefer the latter," Thomas Jefferson said. Because a democracy cannot make the decisions necessary to govern itself without information — accurate and free-flowing — journalism is a foundation stone of our welfare as a nation, a calling of importance equal to public service, medicine, or law. This is why the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution specifically guarantees freedom of the press, and thus of all communications media. Whether you're part of an organization that points up special problems or exposes irregularities, or merely reports on routine events, you're involved in more than "just another way to make a living" — you're in an important, worthwhile, satisfying profession.

In journalism you're on the inside, seeing and reporting first-hand personalities and events that make history; in public relations, helping through news feature, press conferences, and other techniques to move and mold opinions about organizations and events. You work with stimulating people, both your fellow journalists and others with whom your work brings you into contact. Despite the fact that any job includes some routine, journalism holds a minimum

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since most assignments mean meeting new sources.

In some occupations it is difficult as the years pass and interests change to shift your work. But in journalism you can move in the direction that interests take you, into specialized writing such as science, art, or music, into public administration, politics or government foreign service.

In every field, information is vital. In science, for example, a recent publication of the Illinois Institute of Technology pointed out: "A major part of the accelerated national research effort can be viewed as a race of information, since all research culminates in written reports of one form or another." Someone must process, report, and condense such information lest an "information gap" be society's undoing. Because this is all-important, journalism is all-important.

What about working conditions?

Even in small towns, the day of the smoky, ink-stained newsroom has passed.

Newsmen normally work regular "shifts," 35- to 40-hour weeks, in what amount to virtually typical office surroundings, except for such additions as teletype machines, extra phones and semi-circular copy desks.

In public relations work and other fields such as magazine writing and editing, offices may be more plush, and due to the nature of the work, secretarial and research help more nearly approximating that of typical businesses.

Travel, expense accounts, and other items vary according to the type of job within the field. Just as the day of roustabout reporters passed with or before World War II, so have working conditions throughout various branches of journalism improved in the postwar era.

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What about opportunities for women?

Journalism is one of the most opportunity-laden fields for women. One major mid-western school of journalism, for example, has found that in recent years the number of job openings for women in journalism nearly equals those for men.

Some organizations specify "woman journalist wanted" — for publications in industries serving women and for women's magazines (a growing field), and for public relations staffs. Some employers prefer women to men in such positions as editors of house organs and directors of information bureaus.

Large city newspapers employ many women staff members, though in general the beginner works first on the women's page staff or in a similar department. Radio-TV stations and the networks increasingly utilize women in research and writing jobs — a number get on the air as commentators on programs other than just those for women. By-lines and masthead listings in major magazines testify to the success of women in that field.

Journalism blends with a career for the housewife better than almost any other. Opportunities for part-time publicity and writing and editing fit into the free-time of the housewife.

What about advancement in the field?

It's easiest to answer this by looking at what several graduates of one school of journalism have done after graduation.

Four won Pulitzer Prizes: Edgar May (class of 1957) at age of 27 for The Buffalo Evening News for a series on welfare; Lois Wille (1954) for The Chicago Daily News for stories on birth control (Mrs. Wille's husband Wayne is executive editor of the World Book Yearbook); William J. Eaton (1952) for The Chicago Daily News for a series on financial affairs of Supreme Court appointee Clement F. Haynesworth Jr.; and William H. Jones (1965) for the Chicago Tribune for a series on ambulance companies. Robert Colby Nelson (1952), American News Editor, Christian Science Monitor, and former Nieman Fellow, won a Sigma Delta Chi Award for a series on racial problems.

James McCartney (1951) is a national correspondent for the Knight Newspapers based in Washington; Robert Korengold (1951) is London bureau chief for Newsweek; Ralph Otwell (1951) is managing

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editor of The Chicago Sun-Times; and David Mazie (1956) is a free-lance writer based in Washington. All won Nieman Fellowships at Harvard University.

Herb Kaplow (1951) became a network TV and radio newsman in Washington; Frank Cormier (1952) is Associated Press White House correspondent; and John Cole (1958) is Washington bureau chief for The Milwaukee Journal.

Thomas Cheatham (1966) is head of the Tel Aviv Bureau of UPI; Michael Davies (1967) is managing editor of the Louisville Times; and Eugene Myslenski (1967) is a writer for Sports Illustrated.

Ermetra Black (1970) is associate editor of Jet; Lawrence Townsend (1960) is entertainment editor of the Chicago Tribune; Stuart Schwartz (1967) is assistant producer of ABC-TV network news; Steve Ronald (1966) is city editor of the Minneapolis Tribune; Walter Pfister (1951) is news producer for ABC-TV; and Russ Bensley (1952) is writer-producer for Walter Cronkite.

Lynn Slovonsky (1970) is assistant professor at the University of Illinois and Peter Jacobi (1953) is associate dean of the Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University.

Most of these journalists have worked in at least one other phase of the field before settling on their present specialties. They obtained their first jobs either through direct application to the firm involved or through the school's placement office.

What kind of a person can succeed in journalism?

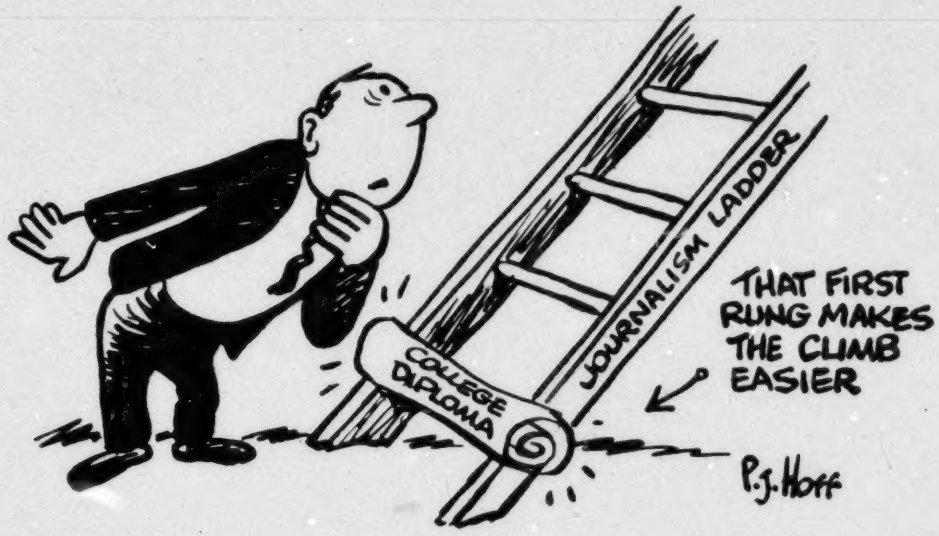
Contrary to somewhat widespread belief, neither ability in nor liking for creative writing, themes or poetry necessarily is important. Nor is it particularly important whether you're full of "writing ideas," you like or dislike working closely with others, or whether you tend to be an extrovert or introvert. Newspapers alone, for instance, have room for persons of all temperaments: some reporters work only by phone, some spend much of their time reading and editing "wire service" copy from teletypes, some interview and gather material while some write headlines and lay out pages, others – rewritemen – turn this into stories.

Of all traits, curiosity usually is deemed most important. Do you wonder why a football is made of pigskin, why one executive is more successful than another, how one entertainer got to the top while another failed, how specific social problems arose and how various officials believe they can be solved? If you're curious, you can unearth information others are interested in learning – and you're well on your way to success in journalism and communications.

How do you prepare for a journalism career?

There are any number of ways. A popular early step is working on a high school newspaper or yearbook, or in school broadcasting, to "get your feet wet." (Lack of interest in this, or lack of an opportunity to participate, however, need not necessarily be considered a liability; many successful journalists got interested "late," or became absorbed in their careers without such participation). To succeed in most positions and assure the greatest future opportunities for advancement, a college education usually is considered essential. Opinions differ as to whether a regular liberal arts degree or a journalism degree should be sought (there now are more than 200 U.S. four-year colleges and universities offering majors in journalism). Either route can lead to success, though journalism schools have some advantages others do not, in helping students get their first jobs in the field. More and more employers are going to journalism schools for employees. Accredited journalism schools require approximately three-fourths of a student's total credits to be in general education, one-fourth in journalism.

While in college students also may obtain vacation or part-time jobs with newspapers, magazines, or in various activities with other organizations employing journalists. The points to remember: the basic skills of journalism can be taught; universities and even the firms seeking journalists assist in job placement; above-average writing ability, though important up to a point, may be secondary in "success potential" to curiosity, initiative, a capacity for evaluating facts and events, and other traits.



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Q-10

Where is more career information available?

Because journalism has expanded and changed so dramatically, no one source of information on the profession covers it all. Be sure to use available resources in your school and public libraries. Make inquiries to journalism departments at nearby colleges and universities. Visit local newspapers and broadcast stations.

For specific information on

SCHOLARSHIPS and other financial aid in college, write for the "Journalism Scholarship Guide," available from The Newspaper Fund, P.O. Box 300, Princeton, N. J. 08540. Also includes information on scholarships for minorities, and scholarships offered by newspapers and professional organizations such as Sigma Delta Chi;

JOURNALISM SCHOOLS AND DEPARTMENTS, see the complete list published in the annual Editor & Publisher Year Book, which may be available in your library or local newspaper office. The list is available in booklet form at $3 per copy; write to the Journalism Educator, School of Journalism, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minn. 55455. Ask for the directory issue; make checks payable to the Journalism Educator.

A list of college journalism programs accredited by the American Council on Education for Journalism (ACEJ) may be obtained by writing to Milton Gross, Secretary-Treasurer, ACEJ, School of Journalism, University of Missouri, Columbia, Mo. 65201.

Other organizations that provide career information include:

American Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation, P.O. Box 17407, Dulles International Airport, Washington, D. C. 20041.

Association for Education in Journalism, Dept. of Journalism, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Ill. 60115.

Division of Manpower and Occupational Outlook, U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Washington, D. C. 20212.

National Association of Broadcasters, 1771 N Street N.W., Washington, D. C. 20036.

Public Relations Society of America, 845 Third Ave., New York, N. Y. 10017.

Radio Television News Directors Association, Rob Downey, Executive Secretary, c/o WKAR, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Mich. 48824.

The Newspaper Fund, P.O. Box 300, Princeton, N. J. 08540.

Women in Communications, 8305-A Shoal Creek Blvd., Austin, Texas 78758.

Additional copies of "The BIG STORY" are available from Sigma Delta Chi, 35 East Wacker Dr., Chicago, Ill. 60601. Single copies free; quantities at 15 cents each.

If your school is in need of a speaker on journalism careers, contact the nearest chapter of Sigma Delta Chi. Address available on request to SDX Headquarters at the Chicago address above.

Sigma Delta Chi also publishes The QUILL, monthly magazine for journalists; subscription information available from SDX Headquarters.

A journalism careers film, "The Journalists," produced by SDX, may be obtained on a free-loan basis by writing to Modern Talking Picture Service, 2323 New Hyde Park Rd., New Hyde Park, N. Y. 11040. List alternate playdates. (16 mm., color, 26 minutes)